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ABSTRACT

This monograph focuses on the issue of the nature and purpose of the social studies curriculum. In the lead article, George Wood maintains that social studies as taught today is irrelevant and strives to produce citizens who are unquestioning supporters of U.S. political and economic institutions. Dr. Wood attributes this state of affairs to the narrowness of the recent debate on the school's role which seems to focus solely on schools as sites of job training. He recommends that the social studies should become relevant by recentering the democratic mission of public schooling in the United States. Students should acquire a sense of political efficacy and public responsibility. The way to accomplish this is to empower teachers, who must also develop this political empowerment. Four social studies educators respond to Wood's articles. S. Samuel Shermis offers historical insight to support Wood's thesis. Frank L. Schiraldi contends that teachers have not applied what is known about effective instruction, and this contributes to the irrelevancy of social studies education. C. Frederick Risinger stresses that the social studies curriculum is determined by societal imperatives, and currently, economic competitiveness is a national imperative. A national consensus on the need of educating for public participation will encourage teachers to change methods and curriculum. William Muthig states that social studies educators need to respond to the various reports with their own concerns and reach a workable compromise on the role of social studies in the future. (SM)

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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE SOCIAL STUDIES?

Occasional Paper No. 8

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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE SOCIAL STUDIES?

Occasional Paper No. 8

Arthur Clubok
Editor

Published by
The Ohio Council for the Social Studies

Foreward

This monograph focuses on the issue of the nature and purpose of the social studies curriculum. In the lead article, Dr. George Wood maintains that the social studies as taught today is irrelevant, striving to produce a citizen who is an unquestioning supporter of our political and economic institutions. He proposes a program that will develop the enlightened and active citizen, one who will demonstrate civic virtue and responsibility. He concludes by suggesting several "democratic approaches" that can be fostered in both the social studies classroom and throughout the school.

Four social studies educators respond to Dr. Wood's article. S. Samuel Shermis, in his support of Wood's thesis, offers some historical insight into the issue. Frank Schiraldi suggests that the debate over the relevance of the social studies should focus on the "shortcomings of the profession," our failure as educators to modify the teaching/learning environment so as to follow what we know about effective instruction. C. Frederick Risinger argues that change in the social studies will not come about from within, but will occur only if there is a broad national consensus supporting this "societal imperative." Finally, William Muthig states that this is an opportune time to improve the social studies, making use of the democratic process to reach a consensus.

Arthur Clubok, Editor

Contents

	Page
Whatever Happened To The Social Studies?	1
Review of "Whatever Happened to the Social Studies?"	11
Whatever Happened To The Social Studies? Reaction to A Paper By George H. Wood	13
Response to George Wood's "Whatever Happened To The Social Studies?"	15
Reaction of "Whatever Happened to the Social Studies?"	18

Whatever Happened To The Social Studies?

George H. Wood
Associate Professor of Education
Coordinator, Institute for Democratic Education
Ohio University

This is, most certainly, an interesting and important time to survey the state of the social studies. Of course, the social studies are only part of the ongoing general debate over the reform and direction of public education. This debate reflects a deeper and broader concern over American culture, one based in uncertainty over the changes, social, economic, political, and personal, which confront each of us daily. Perhaps our current problems were best summed up by Larry Metcalf and Maurice Hunt over thirty years ago:

> It now appears to be the case that great uncertainty has developed in the United States over the kind of education we should have. Some of our most hotly debated and least intelligently considered issues relate to curriculum and methods of teaching in our schools. So great is the confusion that many Americans at this point in the twenthieth century favor educational practices which would destroy those aspects of the culture which they claim to prize most highly.[1]

Today it appears that education is undergoing another similar period of soul-searching.

In the context of the national debate over education, the answer given to whatever happened to the social studies today can only be that they are irrelevant. In what follows I would like to explore what I mean by that claim, how this state of affairs has been recently manifested, and what alternatives all educators, including those in the social studies have.

The Social Studies As Irrelevant

It should be clear that by claiming the social studies to be irrelevant I am not making a normative claim. As a former social studies teacher, I am deeply grieved by the state of the social studies in our schools. As a parent, I am concerned about how my children will come to view their social world - as inquisitive and active citizens or as passive and complacent workers. As a university professor, I am dismayed by the lack of any sort of social awareness on the part of my undergraduate and graduate students. Most importantly, as a citizen I fear deeply for the future of the republic given the anti-democratic nature of so many of our social institutions and the general populace's seeming inability to do anything about it. I believe that the social studies, could indeed do something about all of these trends. However, at the present it seems relegated to a role which makes the time spent in social studies classrooms a waste of students' time.

That is not because social studies teachers desire such a state of affairs. Rather, it is due to the narrowness of much of the recent debate on the role of the school. This debate seems to focus solely on schools as sites of job training, not citizenship preparation. On this point, the reports speak for themselves:

> A Nation At Risk: "Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world." (p.5)

> Action for Excellence (from the Education Commission States): "Japan, West Germany, and other relatively new industrial powers have challenged America's position on the leading edge of change and technical innovation." (p.13)

> Educating Americans for the 21st Century (National Science Foundation): "Already the quality of our manufactured products, the viability of our trade, our leadership in research and development, and our standards of

> living are strongly challenged. We must not let this happen; America must not become an industrial dinosaur." (p.v.)

Taking as their central concern the industrial productivity of the United States, the commissions responsible for these reports see little for the school to do besides promote the production of better workers. In fact, when addressing the mission of the school, report after report stresses the lack of able-bodied manpower to supply the needs of industry and the military. The schools, in response to this need, are to get "back to basics" via more hours in the class, days in school, homework, and standardized tests. I will return to the wisdom of such a focus later, but here let us consider the effect of such proposals upon the social studies.

First, it seems clear that in the drive for industrial efficiency, there is little need for the social learning that concerns social studies educators. That is, why bother with helping children gain the ability to communicate effectively, cooperate, understand diverse cultures, negotiate, think critically, debate, examine, research, judge, value, interpret, analyze, be creative, etc. when the task is merely to become an obedient and productive worker. The recent attempts at reform assume that all the important social questions are answered. Our only task as a society is to increase industrial output and technological innovation. What does a society with all the answers need with children who ask questions?

Second, given the above trend, the campaign appears to be for a social studies curriculum which has at its heart the indoctrination of the young. Can there be any doubt about the intent of the National Commission on Excellence in Education when they called for social studies instruction which would lead children to "Understand the fundamentals of how our economic system works and how our political system functions and grasp the difference between free and repressive societies (p.26)." One can only assume the questions about whether or not the economic and political systems "work" are to go unanswered. Additionally, in today's world, who is to decide what a "free" or "repressive" society is? For example, do we fight in Nicaragua because it is repressive and support the South

African government because it is free? Those questions slip away as we try to make sure students are safe for democracy by teaching them what to think, as opposed to how to think.

In fact, such sentiments have recently come through rather clearly in statements from the Reagan administration's Department of education. For example, Gregg Cunningham, an official (now resigned) in the Education Department's Denver office, released a report with the support of his superiors entitled "Blowing the Whistle on Global Education". In this report, he claims that global education is "pacifistic, capitulationist" and "biased toward political change." Global educators according to Cunningham, "parrot the Soviet propaganda line" and students to become "liberal political activists."[2]

In addition, Chester Finn, Undersecretary of Education, who, along with Gary Bauer (another Education Department official) claims that "maudlin one-worldism...has seized the social-studies establishment."[3] Given this sentiment, one wonders what Finn and his friend William Bennett, Secretary of Education, have in mind with their recent campaign for citizenship education. My own assumption, and I am willing to be proven wrong, is that the Secretary's program will be one that promotes obedience and respect for authority, unquestioning patriotism, and passive citizenship.

If this is what the social studies are to be, then they are indeed irrelevant. They will only offer what can already be found on the television so widely available to children today. It is the politics of the television evangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson and the foreign policy of commercials for everything from beer and hamburgers to automobiles which parody Soviet life. What is the point of spending time in the social studies classroom when the depth of political and social life can be summed up in one-liners crafted by the President's speech writers?

What Is To Be Done?

I do not want to give the impression that I believe that this trend is going on unchecked or without alternatives. In fact, I believe that this is an excellent time to reexamine the social studies in light of the overall mission of the school in order to revive civic learning in the schools. However, if social studies is to once again become relevant it will require beginning by recentering the democratic mission of public schooling in the United States.

Schooling in our democracy is fundamentally a paradoxical process. On one hand there is the legitimate desire to preserve the social order through passing it on, in tact, to children. On the other, democracy functions from the premise that the public may, at any time, through democratic means, alter the current social arrangements. This tension is healthy, and generates much of the excitement around schooling. However, as pointed out above, the pattern today is to preserve a particular vision of the culture by focusing on producing workers while ignoring the democratic function of producing active citizens. what I would suggest is the need to reinstate this fundamental democratic balance in the schools.

We might best start by recalling the words of Thomas Jefferson, in discussing the need for general education. Said Jefferson: "In every government on earth is some trace of human weakness, some germ of corruption and degeneracy, which cunning will discover, and wickedness insensibly open, cultivate and improve. Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves therefore are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree."[4]

Jefferson was arguing for public education for democratic empowerment. The public schools were to become the first defenders of democracy, by promoting a democratic spirit and the intellect needed to order public affairs. Since that time, we have expanded Jefferson's vision, broadening the range of those to be engaged in the act of governance.

range of those to be engaged in the act of governance. However, the sentiment remains the same -- self-government is not something we are born into; it is something we must prepare ourselves for. We ignore this task only at the peril of democracy itself.

If we were to take this task seriously, replacing the industry -- oriented agenda for schools with the civic, what would that mean for schools and the social studies? We would begin with the development in every child a belief in his or her right and responsibility to participate publicly. The rich history of public participation and its function as the bedrock of democracy should take centerstage in the social studies classroom. Too often the bland recounting of the history of government in social studies textbooks has led students to believe that all social life is orchestrated from Washington with little or no public involvement. To the contrary, our communities and larger society move in the ways they do due to the active engagement of citizens. The community should become the classroom, as students see what is possible, where the barriers to participation are and how to remove them, and why they as a member of the community should engage in civic activity.

Second, in conjunction with the foregoing, students will participate if they leave school with a sense of political efficacy -- that is the sense that they can indeed make a difference. In the social studies, the long list of individuals who have made a difference regardless of social background should be held up as an example to students. Further, within the school itself, students should be empowered to make important decisions which will demonstrate to them directly their own efficacy. The lack of such engagement and examples probably does more to passify citizens than any other single curricular or pedagogical practice.

Students should additionally be engaged in the process of valuing the principles of democratic life - equality, justice, and community. In the social studies class they should see that these words do indeed have meaning for which individuals are willing to risk their lives. Further,

much of the propoganda claiming that these concepts are lacking in scientific evidence can be explored in the social studies classroom. Most importantly, the social studies classroom provides an excellent location to explore the historic alternatives to these principles. What are the realities of social life not guided by equality, justice, and community? Would students readily choose those? What principles are they most willing to commit themselves to?

Finally, the school and the social studies classroom should provide students with a sense of social alternatives. The only way to effectively engage in a process of choice is to know what options do exist. Rather than the subject matter of civics, economics, sociology, political science, and the rest being presented as given truth, all areas need to be made problemmatic through the consideration of alternatives. When students see that social life can be organized in a variety of useful and effective ways, some of their blinders to choice fall away.

In this paper I have not tried to examine each of the above four democratic approaches fully. There is not space for that here and, additionally, each teacher will have to do that for him or herself anyway.[5] What is important is to note that these proposals all represent democratic alternatives which have been proposed and endorsed by a new wave of educational reform reports.[6] Additionally, all of the above proposals come from my work with classroom teachers who are currently teaching in these ways.[7] The point is that these reforms are all based in an attempt to make democratic empowerment the central task of the school -- a task which makes the social studies once again a central and relevant part of the curriculum.

Conclusion

It has been my contention that schooling, and thus the social studies, is at another of the many crossroads it has faced and will face. This is an exciting time of democratic reform, though it is often overlooked by the popular media. However, there are two issues left unanswered which must additionally be addressed.

First, am I suggesting that democratic empowerment occur only within the social studies classroom? Definately not. While I have focused upon social studies in this paper, I believe that what is presented here and in many of the reports is an agenda for the democratization of the entire school, in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Social studies classrooms should be islands of democracy in which their message is too easily lost in the surrounding sea of undemocratic, or even anti-democratic practice.

Second, I additionally believe that teachers who are concerned with democratic empowerment are teachers who are empowered themselves.[8] That is, to teach in a way which is democratic requires teachers who have had direct experience with democracy themselves. This means that teachers need to be granted more autonomy within schools to set their own direction and do what they believe is best for children. In much of the anti-democratic reform literature a great deal is made of how poorly equipped teachers are, and how great is the need for stricter teacher testing and merit pay. The consequence of such action will not be to make teachers better, only to make them afraid. It is only when teachers are encouraged to do their best and given the opportunity to do so, that they will improve. Only democratic school reform offers that possibility.

I do believe that teachers, among them social studies teachers, are the only real hope for the democratic renewal of the schools. In saying this, I believe I am echoing the words of Hunt and Metcalf with which I close this essay:

> Teachers of the social studies can help to tip the scales in one direction or the other by the kind of learning they choose to promote. Choice, not drift, should determine our future. Learning which consists primarily of conditioned responses is not consistant with the needs of democratic citizenship. Although to be expected in any dictatorship, its presence in any American school is an anomoly and a mockery. Learning in the

associationist tradition is quite suited to the requirements of a totalitarian state, where closed areas are held inviolate and conflicts are erased or supressed through an education based upon propoganda and indoctrination. The democratic alternative is much greater emphasis upon the development of higher thought processes, with all this implies for reflective examination of critical social issues.[9]

End Notes

[1] Maurice P. Hunt and Lawrence E. Metcalf, Teaching High School Social Studies, Second Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 27.

[2] "E.D. Aid Fans 'Global' Debate," Education Week 2 May 1986, p. 1.

[3] Ibid., p. 3.

[4] Andrew A. Lipscomb (ed.), The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 2 (The Thomas Jefferson Association, 1903), p. 207.

[5] An excellence example of such a work is Eliot Wigginton, Sometimes A Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

[6] See, for example, Ernest Boyer, High School (New York: Harper and Row, 1983); John Goodlad, A Place Called School (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985); Mary Ann Raywid, Charles Tesconi and Donald Warren, Pride and Promise: Schools of Excellence for All The People (Westbury, Conn.: American Educational Studies Association, 1984); The Public Education Information Network, Education for A Democratic Future (St. Louis: The Public Education Information Network, Education for A Democratic Future (St. Louis: The Public Education Information Network, 1985).

[7] For information on the Institute for Democratic Education and the teachers involved, please contact us at The College of Education, 372 McCracken Hall, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701.

[8] The point was developed more fully in George Wood, "Education for Democratic Empowerment: Empowering Democratic Educators," paper presented at the 1986 Annual Concerence of the American Educational Studies Association, November, 1987.

[9] Hunt and Metcalf, p. 42.

Review of "Whatever Happened to the Social Studies?"
by
George H. Wood

S. Samuel Shermis, Professor
Department of Education
Purdue University

George H. Wood has, as Mrs. Malaprop might have said, hit the nail on the crux.

His specifications of where Hunt and Metcalf were right in 1955 are accurate, and in my judgment, supported by all available evidence. The evidence, I should add, I have attempted to gather this last year when I was freed to do research on the origins of the social studies, which seems to have occurred between 1915 and 1925.

Specifically, let me deal with just three of Professor Wood's charges:

1. Much of a student's time is wasted in social studies. As Shaver, Helburn and Wiggins have observed, social studies teachers interpret social studies as recitation over one textbook for one semester in which all students learn the same content and are tested in the same way. This might be regarded as boring and self-defeating by the populace *if social studies were truly concerned with problem-solving and decision-making* as Shirley Engle argued in the early 1960's. However, social studies is usually interpreted as character-building and for this purpose memorization is taken to be just the trick. Routine-plagued schools in which conformity is the highest value have little to do with problem-solving and everything to do with developing the faculties of memory and will. And if this sounds as if it reflects an anachronism, a vestigial remnant of an obsolete theory of learning, you are right.

2. Debate on education has narrowed its scope to "promote the production of better workers" while "all imporant social questions" are assumed to be answered. Long before the Conant report, long before the 1932 seventeen volume report, long before the Committee of Seven and even the Committee of Ten

writing in 1893, all important social questions were assumed to be answered. While there was a great deal of talk about coping with social problems and creating a new breed of citizens fit to govern themselves, there was also a great deal of talk about the importance of memorization and the necessity of students developing loyalty to dozens of social values, none of which were ever defined and most of which were mutually exclusive. In fact, then, the apparent consensus about citizenship as *the* goal of the social studies vanishes in a flood of vague and emotive rhetoric in which "citizenship", "social problem" and every other key term was simply taken for granted. *In fact, then, there never has been a debate on national goals as they relate to the social studies.*

3. Social studies has become a vehicle for indoctrination. This is precisely what Bessie Louise Pierce, a major American intellect and one of the very few women involved in the founding of the social studies, warned in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1930s when the great debate on indoctrination took place in the pages of The Social Frontier, the position that seems to have triumphed can be phrased as follows:

> Indoctrination is a reprehensible practice and has no place in a democracy. However, indoctrination of the right basic values is acceptable and must be considered guidance.

Professor James Barth and I argue that one cannot simultaneously indoctrinate and promote autonomous thought on value conflicts and social policy. However, our position is regarded in the profession as wrong-headed.

Would that space allowed for response to the other half dozen major points that Professor Wood has made. The National Council would do well to publish his brief essay and use it as an agenda for discussion for the next five years.

Whatever Happened To The Social Studies?
Reaction to A Paper By George H. Wood

Frank L. Schiraldi
Assistant Director, Curriculum and Instruction
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education
Ohio Department of Education

Professor Wood has provided us with an opportunity to focus the ongoing and wide-ranging debate on educational reform directly on the social studies. The sad state of this important curricular area, described by the author as "irrelevant", is all too clearly recognized by many concerned citizens and scholars. Wood is exactly correct in his observation that a great many of the recent reports, with their recommendations for educational reform, appear to be primarily concerned with increasing the industrial productivity of the United States. If this desire to "... promote the production of better workers" through a concerted effort to "... get back to basics" is not a conscious effort to turn away from "... the social learning that concerns social studies educators," the result is the same. The author's contention, however, that "... the time spent in social studies classrooms [is] a waste of students' time...is due to the narrowness of much of the recent debate on the role of the school," is neither accurate nor especially helpful in addressing the problem.

While one would accept the author's contention that the problems besetting social education are not caused "...because social studies teachers desire such a state of affairs," the time has come to recognize that many factors which do indeed contribute to the irrelevance of social education are caused by shortcomings within the professional ranks. Wood observes, again correctly, that education is increasingly influenced by a variety of efforts which are best described as political or economic in nature. These efforts constitute a pragmatic, utilitarian purpose for social education (e.g., increasing trade and/or diplomatic advantage for the United States). What Wood fails to recognize in his brief analysis, is that scholarly empirical research has provided social educators with the information, largely unheeded, necessary to respond

to the so called reformers. The effect has been the development of a disparity or disjunction in terms of what is needed, our understanding of how to do that well, and what we do in fact.

Wood clearly recognizes that what is needed is "...public education for democratic empowerment." He does not seem to recognize, however, that his concern about whether children will view their social world as inquisitive and active citizens or as passive and complacent workers; his dismay over the lack of any sort of social awareness on the part of undergraduate students; and his deep fear for the future of the republic given the seeming inability of the general populace to do anything about the anti-democratic nature of many social institutions, are not the result of a narrow debate on school reform so much as a failure to apply what we know about effective instruction in social education.

Students and teachers need to be active constructors of meaning. Students must be able to reorganize incoming stimuli on the basis of prior knowledge, value orientations, and the constructive processes employed in particular learning situations. The most important variable accounting for learning from instruction is the frequency and intensity with which students cognitively process instructional input. It would seem then, that teacher effectiveness is the critical variable in student learning. Specifically, the expectations and achievement objectives teachers hold for themselves, their classes, and individual students; how they select and design academic tasks; and how actively they instruct and communicate with students about academic tasks are directly related to increased student learning. Teachers who do these things successfully possess a blend of knowledge, energy, motivation, and communication and decision-making skills. A declining supply of teachers adequately prepared to be instructionally effective may be the answer to the query--What happened to the social studies?

Response to George Wood's "Whatever Happened To The Social Studies?"

C. Frederick Risinger
Associate Director, Social Studies Development Center
Indiana University, Bloomington

Social studies teachers, department heads, and curriculum specialists should carefully read George Wood's incisive essay. As they read, they should ask themselves, "Is this the kind of social studies I believe in?" and "If Wood's 'democratic empowerment' concept is the heart of the social studies, why do I see so little of it in my building or school district?"

Wood's view of the social studies curriculum as training for public participation places him directly alongside Shirley Engle and Larry Metcalf in Barr, Barth and Shermis's "Three Traditions" of the social studies. Like Engle and Metcalf, Wood believes that our society can continually be strengthened and renewed through social criticism and public participation. Moreover, they advocate that training for this essential role as a citizen can and should begin in the schools, and particularly in the social studies curriculum. In a sense, this places the schools in a leadership position in areas such as public policy development and social change. I'm not certain that the public schools can or should have that role. Instead, I believe that the schools, and especially the social studies, become a vehicle for achieving societal imperatives, goals that may be determined through a deliberate, structured process or may simply seem to "emerge" through some national form of concensus development.

To illustrate that point, reflect on the content of social studies in the past hundred years or so. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, hundreds of thousands of immigrants from dozens of nations and cultures were coming to the U.S. each year. Without a great national debate, the role of the schools (particulary those in urban areas) became one of assimilation and preparation for basic citizenship tasks. Schools were the most visible and most effective crucibles in the melting pot concept. Sixty years later, when racial pride and feelings of ethnicity were important to Americans,

the social studies curriculum included such courses as "Minorities in American Culture" and "Afro-American History." When the United States--officially and unofficially--decided to dismantle the semi-apartheid of racial discrimination, the schools were used to achieve this societal imperative. Much of the curriculum , in English, science, and health as well as the social studies, included content and strategies designed to increase tolerance and racial understanding. In other words, society determines the role of the schools and the social studies. Currently, economic "competiveness" is one of these societal imperatives. It is possible that another one exists--a deep, partly subconcious feeling that our nation requires unity of purpose after two decades of political and social division. This could be the rationale for such diverse phenomona as Secretary Bennett's recommendation that stories of national heroes and deeds of courage be read in elementary social studies and the "English as the national language" movement.

I agree strongly with George Wood that it is an excellent time to reexamine the role and purpose of the social studies. I also believe that this review is occurring. A National Commission on the Social Studies has recently been established. Major reports on global education, geography and economics seem to be having an impact on textbook development as well as state and local curriculum efforts. But a nagging thought keeps haunting me. Even if these blue-ribbon groups and social studies theorists would advocate a public participation focus for the social studies, could we really change what goes on in the classroom. Wood's description of social studies has several "shoulds" in it. "The community should become the classroom..." ..students should be impowered to make import- and decisions." "Students should...be engaged in the processes of valuing the principles of democratic life..." And, "...the social studies should provide students with a sense of social alternatives." These are laudable objectives that have been advocated by social studies educators at least since the 1960's. Nothing prevents teachers from implementing much of what Wood advocates right now. But, it is a rarity to hear about an individual teacher who bases his or her instruction on these ideas and nearly impossible to find a department or system that is actually implementing these principles. Until we can persuade

inservice and preservice teachers that this philosophy of social studies is as important as "citizenship transmission," the curriculum and methods will not change. And, we cannot persuade teachers until a national consensus agrees that national renewal through public participation is a societal imperative.

Reaction of "Whatever H
Happened to the Social Studies?"

by Ge
George H. Wood

Wil
William Muthig

Course of
of Study Consultant

Ohio Depar
partment of Education

"Whatever Happened To T
The Social Studies?" has two points
of focus. The first is that
hat the attention given to the social
studies in several recent ed
educational reform reports is centered
on how the social studies ca
can contribute to a more productive
workforce in America. Profe
fessor Wood does not agree with that
prescription. This perspect
ctive leads him to the second focal
point of his paper. The soc
ocial studies should, according to
Professor Wood, contribute t
to a revival of "civic learning"
in the schools.

In calling for the scho
hools to aid American economic re-
covery, reports such as A Na
Nation At Risk have prompted an
environment for educational
l reform. Rather than being overly
concerned with the "narrowne
ness" of the debate engendered by
the reports and keeping in m
mind that some social studies edu-
cators may agree with the su
suggestions in the reports, we should
look with anticipation at th
the possibilities for the social
studies in the current debat
ate about school reform. Summarizing
three of the major reports i
in booklet form, Phi Delta Kappa
entitled its publication, "T
"The Reports: Challenge & Opportunity."
The social studies need to e
embrace the challenge and the
opportunity.

Interestingly, Professo
sor Wood provides a number of valuable
suggestions in the second ha
half of his paper on how the social
studies can address the issu
sues raised in the reports. He writes
of the virtues of a democrat
atic education and a democratic society.
Therein lies the key as to h
how social studies educators should
respond to the reform report
rts. Democracy is based upon the
participation of a society's
's members and compromise between
those members to produce the
he common good. We need not slavishly
follow the recommendations o
of the Action for Excellence report

or any other report. Instead we can respond with concerns of our own and reach a workable compromise on the role of the social studies in the future.

The distress evidenced in the first part of "Whatever Happened To The Social Studies" is relieved by Professor Wood's own suggestions in the second half of the paper. The democratic process will work. Social studies educators have to have the same sense of political efficacy that they seek to instill in their students.